

NIGERIA, TOGO, GHANA & BENIN: PREPAREDNESS - POPULATION MOVEMENT (TOGO ELECTIONS)-

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The Situation

Elections in Togo took place on Sunday, 21 June, without any of the violence that had been anticipated in some quarters. However, the following day the Electoral Commission resigned and the counting of votes was suspended. On 23 June an announcement that the incumbent President, Gnassingbe Eyedama, had won the elections with 52% of the poll, provoked protests and unrest in the capital Lomé. It had been reported that the opposition had secured 80 % of the poll when the suspension was announced.

Unrest following Togo's last elections in 1993 caused an exodus of 350,000 refugees to neighbouring Nigeria, Benin and Togo. On June 25 at least ten people were wounded on the second night of protests. Police used tear gas to break up crowds unhappy with the re-election of Africa's longest-serving President.

In Nigeria the chances of serious unrest appear to have diminished with the transfer of power from the late Sani Abacha to General Abdul-Salaam Abubakar, who has not only undertaken to respect the dates for handing over power to a civilian government, but has also released many political prisoners. These actions, combined with reports that he has had discussions with Chief Moshood Abiola have eased greatly political tension in the country.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Having learnt from previous experiences, the Red Cross Societies in Nigeria, Benin, Togo and Ghana have been building their capacities in relief assistance, first aid and refugee/IDP management.

The **Nigerian Red Cross Society** has continued to provide first aid training for volunteers and has teams ready to deploy in the five states deemed to be most at risk: Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Kwara and Osun.

Forty-five trained **Togolese Red Cross** teams, placed near polling centres and political party offices, assisted those wounded in rioting during and after the elections. Together with the ICRC the

National Society also held International Humanitarian Law training sessions with the army. In Lomé, the National Society has a permanent team monitoring the activities of first aid volunteers throughout the country. Red Cross branches in the nine identified at-risk areas each have 20-30 well trained volunteers who are ready to provide assistance. As the social situation is still tense, the NS remains prepared to provide assistance.

Ghana Red Cross has 2,000 volunteers, 570 trained in first aid and others in water and sanitation on standby in the Volta region (25 km from the Togolese border). It also is prepared to deliver food, water and non-food items up to 20,000 refugees if needed.

The **Benin Red Cross** has trained 115 first aid volunteers in four local committees bordering Togo. Its first aiders along the border region are in a state of alert and are monitoring the situation on a daily basis.

The Federation Regional Delegation in Abidjan is monitoring the situation and positioned to assist if needed.

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